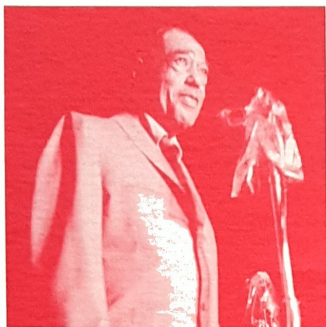


DUKE ELLINGTON, HIS ORCHESTRA AND FRIENDS

AT THE
FIRST ANNUAL CONNECTICUT JAZZ FESTIVAL, JULY 28, 1956



Willie 'The Lion' Smith



Buck Clayton

featuring

Cat Anderson
Harry Carney
Paul Gonsalves
Jimmy Hamilton
Johnny Hodges
Ray Nance
Russell Procope
Clark Terry
Britt Woodman
Sam Woodyard

plus

Hank Jones



Walter Page



Art Trappier



Duke Ellington, His Orchestra & Friends
at the
First Annual Connecticut Jazz Festival
Fairfield, July 28, 1956

STEREO

IAJRC 45

SIDE 1

1. FESTIVAL SUITE, FIRST MOVEMENT
2. FESTIVAL SUITE, SECOND MOVEMENT
3. FESTIVAL SUITE, THIRD MOVEMENT
4. TEA FOR TWO
5. DO NOTHIN' TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME
vr Jimmy Grissom

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAZZ RECORD COLLECTORS



Duke Ellington, His Orchestra & Friends
at the
First Annual Connecticut Jazz Festival
Fairfield, July 28, 1956

STEREO

IAJRC 45

SIDE 2

1. PERDIDO
2. FINGERBUSTER
3. (WHEN YOU) SQUEEZE ME
4. THE HAWK TALKS
5. I GOT IT BAD (AND THAT AIN'T GOOD)
6. TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN (vr Ray Nance)
7. AD LIB BLUES
8. MOOD INDIGO

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAZZ RECORD COLLECTORS

DUKE & FRIENDS AT THE FIRST ANNUAL CONNECTICUT JAZZ FESTIVAL

The First Connecticut Jazz Festival, produced by sometime jazz guitarist, singer, and then ABC disc jockey Sidney Gross, was held at the Fairfield University Field in Westport, Connecticut, for the benefit of the Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, on July 27, 1956.

If that date sounds vaguely familiar, perhaps it's because it was exactly three weeks to the day after the famous 1956 Newport Jazz Festival Duke Ellington session at which Paul Gonsalves made jazz history with his 27-chorus solo on "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue," accompanied by the Ellington band and Jo Jones on rolled-up newspaper.

The Ellington band was once again the top attraction at the one-night Connecticut Festival, which also featured Harlem slide pianist and composer Willie "The Lion" Smith, an old and very close friend of Duke; the Chico Hamilton Quintet, then at the height of its popularity; singer Barbara Lest, and such jazz standouts as trumpeter Buck Clayton, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Walter Page, and drummer Art Trappier. All are heard on these excerpts from the concert except for the Chico Hamilton Quintet and Barbara Lest.

As might have been expected, the Ellington selections were typical of the late Duke was providing at concerts in the mid-50's with one notable exception—the brand-new, three-movement jazz *Festival Suite* written by Duke and Billy Strayhorn for the Newport Festival and introduced there by Duke as "a new thing."

The performance heard here is very similar to that played at Newport (Columbia CL 934), with a couple of exceptions.

For one thing, the first movement, the medium-tempo *Festival Junction*, as played at Newport, began with Jimmy Hamilton playing a solo into and then playing the theme. Here, the piece is kicked off with a few chords by Duke, after which the band states the theme, with no clarinet solos. At all. Otherwise, it features the same string of soloists, all introduced by Duke—Willie Cook, Gonsalves, Britt Woodman, Harry Carney, Quentin Jackson, Russell Procope, and, finally, Cal Anderson, producing one gorgeous Armstrong-influenced chorus and then taking it out with a chorus and coda of typical stratospheric lode.

Duke makes a curious fluff in introducing the second movement, the beautiful, slow-tempo *Blues To Be There*, when he announces that the soloists will be Procope, Ray Nance, "and then Johnny Hodges will play the melody." Actually, Hodges never appears, and, in fact, *Festival Suite* is one of the very few extended Ellington compositions on which Hodges doesn't play even a single composed with a Bubber Miley-style whirly, particularly impressive.

The third movement, *Newport Up*, is taken at a wild tempo, with solos by Hamilton, Clark Terry (in his most exuberant, almost free, post-bop style of the period), and Gonsalves, which he played 27 choruses, breaking his Newport record by 10). As at Newport, the movement ends with a first series of chase choruses by the three horns, followed by a most unusual union big ending.

For Two brings together what was called the Festival All-Stars for the first of two numbers which permit us to listen to some of the Ellingtonians (Hamilton, Gonsalves, Jimmy Woods and Sam Woodyard) in a jam mode, along with Buck Clayton, Hank Jones and Freddie Henderson (Sidney Gross, present but unheard on guitar, Buck, then at the height of his powers, is outstanding here, and all the other members of the group take Gross are heard in fine solos.

It's back to Duke once again, this time for a typical Jimmy Griesom vocal on a one-chorus and out *Do Nothing 'Till You Hear from Me*.

The B side gets under way with a set by The Lion, Duke's old Harlem buddy. The first number—a tip of The Lion's derby to Duke—is *Perdido*, played by a quartet with Clayton, Walter Page and Art Trappier. Buck is sinuous and inventive and The Lion is in fine two-handed form. Then, as if to remind Duke of his roots, The Lion goes into a poppy, up-tempo, stride version of *Firewater*, which Buck sits out.

The set concludes with a lovely performance of *Squeeze Me*, on which both Buck and The Lion are in top form. Listen, for example, to the superb break toward the end of Buck's first solo chorus, and the lovely rolling chords The Lion employs both in backing Buck's solo work and in his own solo.

Then, more Duke, with *The Hawk Talks*, this time in a brief version with, as Sidney Gross tells us, Sam Woodyard "tiring on the beat" and play the leading role in the Louis Bellson flag-waver. The Hodges feature, *I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good*, follows, with Ray providing a typical bravura performance. This set ends with a vocal live version by Ray Nance of *Take the A Train*, with some nutty lyrics, a little scuffling, and a bit of Tommy Dorsey "Marie"-type union vocal responses by the band.

The medium-tempo *Ad Lib Blues* brings us another generous sampling of the Festival All-Stars. Again, Buck plays beautifully, reminding us once more of just fine a trumpeter he was at his peak, and Hamilton, Gonsalves there in his slowed-down, Ben Webster mode, and Jones all pitch in with good solos. There's also three fine chase choruses before the horns take it on out.

And, finally, it's the closer, a minute or so of *Mood Indigo*, then being used as the sign-off theme, with Duke, over the band, going into his usual "You're very beautiful, very sweet, and we love you madly..." routine in bidding adieu to the audience of more than 10,000 people who had turned out for the Festival.

While a local newspaper story on the Festival hailed it as a "saccharine" field day," referring to Hodges, Gonsalves and Carney, the evidence offered by the 56 minutes of music heard here is that it was in fact a triumphant night for trumpeters, with Buck and all four members of Duke's trumpet section providing many memorable moments.

And, besides that, it's nice to have another version of *Festival Suite* on record, since there aren't many around, and to hear a little more of The Lion, and Buck.

And, most of all, perhaps, is the reminder of just how good jazz could sound on any particular night 30 years ago.

Irwin Hershey

IAJC member Hershey, a primitive art expert and travel consultant, has been a jazz buff—and Ellington fan—for almost 50 years.

SIDE 1

1. *Festival Suite, First Movement: Festival Junction* (Ellington-Strayhorn) 6:17 (a)
2. *Festival Suite, Second Movement: Blues To Be There* (Ellington-Strayhorn) 6:42 (a)
3. *Festival Suite, Third Movement: Newport Up* (Ellington-Strayhorn) 5:38 (a)
4. *For Two* (Russell Ellington) 8:06 (b)
5. *Do Nothing 'Till You Hear from Me* (v. Jimmy Griesom) 1:51 (a) - v. Jimmy Griesom

SIDE 2

1. *Perdido* (Tutty-Ellington) 4:25 (c)
2. *Firewater* (v. Duke Ellington) 2:10 (b)
3. *When You Squeeze Me* (Russell-Williams-Webster) 4:01 (a)
4. *The Hawk Talks* (v. Duke Ellington) 2:29 (a)
5. *I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)* (Webster-Ellington) 3:29 (a)
6. *Take the A Train* (Strayhorn) 2:36 (a) - v. Ray Nance and the band
7. *Ad Lib Blues* (unknown) 7:11 (b)
8. *Mood Indigo* (Ellington-Bigard-Mills) 1:53 (a)

(a) DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Cal Anderson, Clark Terry, Ray Nance, Willie Cook, t; Britt Woodman, Quentin Jackson, John Sanders, b; Russell Procope, as, ct; Johnny Hodges, as; Paul Gonsalves, ts; Jimmy Hamilton, ct, ts; Harry Carney, bar; Duke Ellington, p; Jimmy Woods, b; Sam Woodyard, d; Jimmy Griesom, vd

(b) FESTIVAL ALL-STARS

Buck Clayton, t; Paul Gonsalves, ts; Jimmy Hamilton, ct; Hank Jones, p; Sidney Gross, g; Sam Woodyard, d

(c) WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH QUARTET

Buck Clayton, t; Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; Walter Page, b; Art Trappier, d

(d) same as (c) with Clayton out

Acknowledgments:

Concert Tapes: Jerry Mathum
Production: Bruce D. Davidson
Mastering: Jack Towns
Concert Research: Don Roun
Technical Assistance: Alga R. Choate
Photos: Duncan Schied, except *Perdido* by Frank Driggs
Jazz Concept: Bruce D. Davidson
Layout and Design: Tony Robert Shado

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For information about the Association, write:
Secretary: IAJRC
90 Prince George Drive
Burlington, Ontario M6H 2G9
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